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Senator, District 32

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

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Testimony of Senator Henry Ingwersen in support of

LD 2277, An Resolve, Authorizing the Commissioner of Administrative and Financial Services to Convey by Sale the Interests of the State in 3 Properties Located in Biddeford, Sanford and York

Before the Joint Select Committee on Housing

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and Members of the Select Committee on Housing, I am Henry Ingwersen, representing Senate District 32, including the City of Biddeford and the towns of Arundel, Dayton, Hollis, and Lyman. I am testifying today in strong support of LD 2277, Resolve, Authorizing the Commissioner of Administrative and Financial Services to Convey by Sale the Interests of the State in 3 Properties Located in Biddeford, Sanford and York.

York County, Maine like other counties throughout the state, faces a ballooning crisis of homelessness. In Biddeford, as of December 2023, there were 48 unhoused people living in one encampment alone, and 6 known camps with 2 or more individuals. In 2023 there were 314 housing-based interactions, including people living on the streets as well as those needing rental assistance. Sanford's unhoused data is even more eye-opening, with a 1420% increase from 2021 to 2023.

As a former teacher, I find the rise in unhoused students in my district heartbreaking. Moment-in-time data from 2022 found that around 3% of students in the Biddeford-Saco schools were unhoused. The majority of homeless students are the most vulnerable to learning loss, and one-third are early elementary students. Fifty-Nine percent of homeless youth were chronically absent from school during the beginning months of the 2023-24 school year.

The opportunity for 3 local housing authorities in York County to acquire the retired district court buildings will help the county to better meet its support for the full-spectrum of affordable housing development, including permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, the Housing First Model, workforce housing, and housing for low-income individuals and families. I hope you will join me in supporting this resolve.

Thank you.

*Chair, Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee * Health and Human Services Committee*
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Proudly representing Senate District 32: Arundel, Biddeford, Dayton, Hollis, Lyman